

before i sit down to write i go in the kitchen
and make myself a big cheese sandwich, pour
myself a glass of wine and stand in the window
and watch the cars passing below on the highway

before i sit down to write i put some music on
the stereo and walk around adjusting the pictures
on the walls, even going so far as to rearrange
some of them, putting them in places i never
thought of before

before i sit down to write i go in the bathroom
and trim my beard, washing the hairs down the
drain with ice-cold water

before i sit down to write i live forty years,
nine months and fifteen some odd days in needful
yet exhausting preparation

POETRY HAS RUINED ME

my father likes to tell people that poetry has ruined
my life. it doesn't bother me anymore when i happen to
hear him say this. all my life he has been a source of
negative comment. also i am at the age now where we've
said just about everything to one another so many times
that nothing has any punch anymore. and as far as poetry
ruining my life goes, well, there is some truth to this,
at least in some regards. for example: because of poetry
i will never keep my lawn neatly cut. it'll grow wild
and the weeds will have their own way. my car will al-
ways be an old jalopy. it will be ruined with rust, and
the insides will always be piled high with newspapers
and model airplanes that won't fly (if ever i decide to
attempt building and flying model airplanes). my house
will be in perpetual shambles, eaten to the ground by
poetry as if by crazed carpenter ants. and my children
will be worthless. my ruined life will have ruined
children running around it. they will be ruined by a
lack of authority on my part, and they will run free
to terrorize the neighborhood and eventually grow up
and have ruined children of their own, who in turn will
go out and ruin the four corners of the world. my
wife will be ruined too. i'll ruin her with poetry
just like i've ruined my own life. in time her
teeth will turn black, her hair will turn white and
her skin will rot with ruin. all this will happen
to her from the effects of my poetry. i too will die
from it. ruined in my grave. honored in heaven.

— Ronald Baatz
Kingston NY